k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MI4
Muntafiq

TATTOOING OF WOMEN

304 Tattooing is an extremely common practice especially among the Iraq tribal women. It is less common among the Badawin tribes and rarest among those who have come under Wahhabi influence. The only tribe in Arabia proper which, as far as I am aware, never tattoos its women are the 'Ajman. They look upon the custom as disgraceful and dishonouring. The Mutair practise the custom. A whole book could be written on the subject of tattooing, for quite apart from mere beauty tattooing, every single tribe in Iraq has special tattoo marks to denote the tribe which a woman belongs to.

I recommend the study of tribal tattoo marks in Iraq to any woman who is keen to advance the cause of knowledge. She will, of course, have to examine in detail the bodies of the various young women she comes across, but with tact she should not find the task insurmountable. As an example the famous 'Abuda tribe of Shatra (Muntafiq) insist on every one of their women having one round small spot tattooed on the right cheek 1½ inches under the eye.

The following are a few tribal tattoo marks, collected by my wife in Iraq. They belong to the Ma'adan or Marsh Arab tribes of the Euphrates and to Muntafiq shepherd tribes:

A man never tattoos himself. It is *'aib*, a shameful thing.

The northern Badawin, 'Anizah and its branches (the Ruwala Fida'an, Amarat, Sb'aa, Dahamsha, etc.), also the great Dhafir tribe, tattoo their women much more than those nearer Wahhabi land.

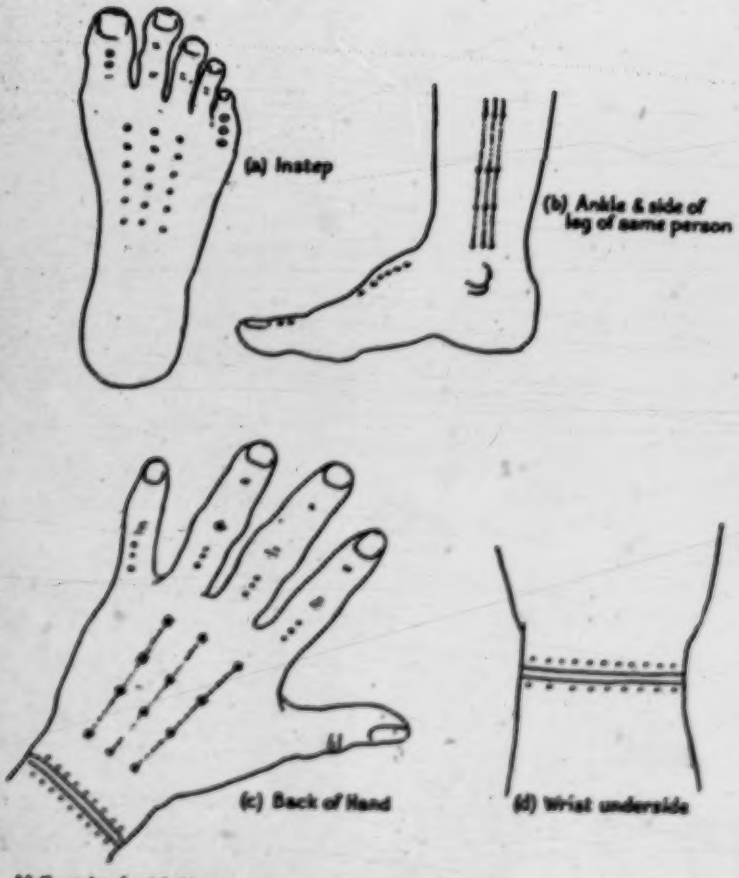
The Ma'adan or Marsh Arab tribes seem to go in for tattooing to a far greater extent than any desert Badawin, and they uncover their faces altogether.

The Ma'adan are found roughly in the triangle formed by the towns of Kerbela (on the Euphrates) and Amara (on the Tigris), and Basra, the best examples being the tribes encircling the Hamar lake. This is their home *par excellence*. In ancient days the marshes stretched from Kufa on the Euphrates down to the junction of the latter with the Tigris. To-day, even though the Northern Ma'adan have lost their marsh lands, they still retain their ancient customs, and their old name of Ma'adan, e.g. Fatla, Bani Hassan, etc., round Kufa.

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

Muntafiq

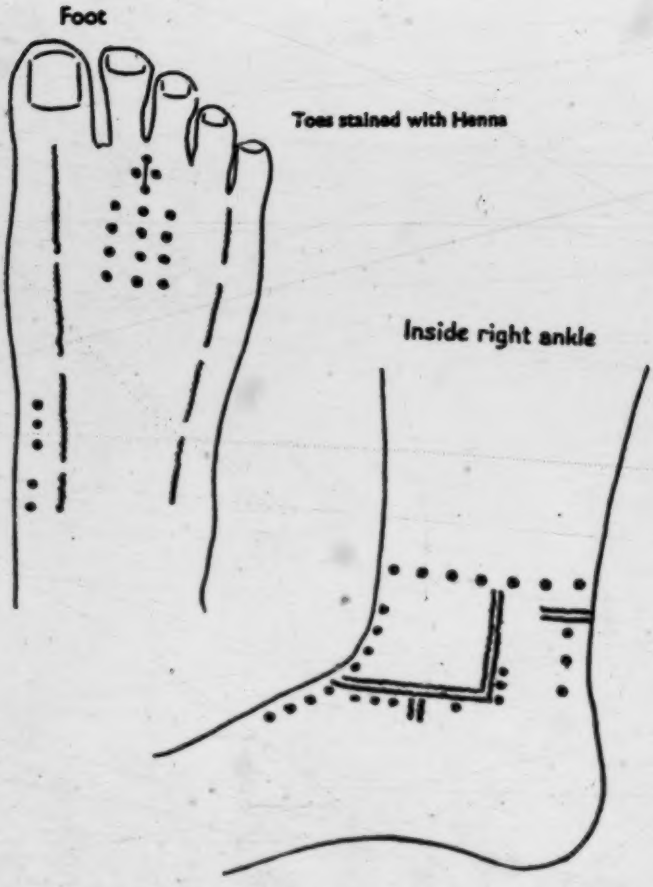
A FATLA (MA'ADAN) TRIBAL GIRL OF THE MIDDLE EUPHRATES 304
(Habitat Abu Sukhair, Iraq)



[From life, 10.9.23]

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4
Muntafiq

304 ANOTHER FATLA GIRL OF MIDDLE EUPHRATES

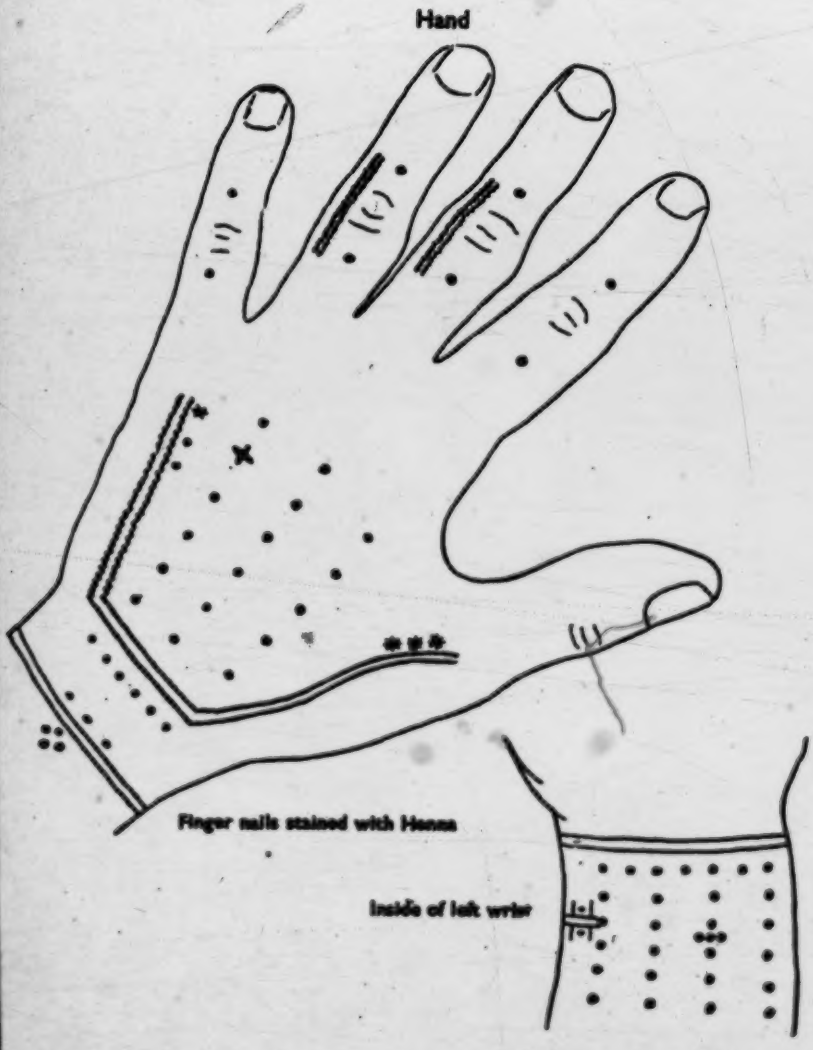


[From life, 15.9.23]

Chap. IX

Tattooing

SAME GIRL 304



k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4
Muntafiq

304 GIRL OF THE MA'AMERAH TRIBE (MA'ADAN)
(Habitat near Hilla, Iraq)

Eyebrows plucked and replaced by one line of tattoo

Centre line from chin to navel, then round waist in form of a belt

Thigh markings

Three-line marking down the outside of both thighs (common to everyone)

A joins belt at waist.

B ends 6 in. above knee.

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4
Muntafiq

GIRL OF THE AZAIRIJ TRIBE OF THE MUNTAFIQ 304
(Habitat, Nasriyah, Iraq)

Variation of the chin-navel tatooing

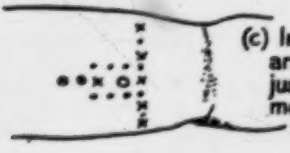
k: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4
Muntafiq

●304 UNMARRIED GIRL OF THE BADŪR TRIBE OF THE FAWÁZ SECTION, A SHEPHERD TRIBE OF THE MUNTAFIQ

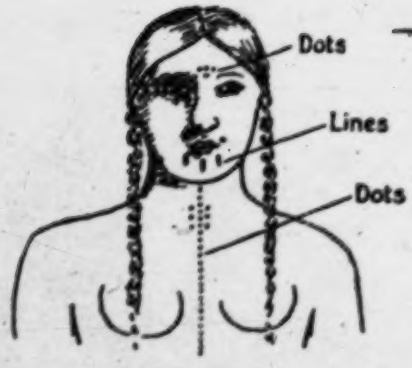
(Ajwad group, Middle Euphrates)

(a) Outside edge of forearm

(b) Back of each hand



(c) Inside of each arm above elbow just below biceps muscles



(d) Face, Neck and Chest.

[Taken from the life at Kuwait, 13.3.37]

k: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4
Muntafiq

Origin of Tattoo Marks

Chap. IX

I myself incline to the theory that the Ma'adan are the direct descendants of the ancient Sumerians and have inherited their wonderful tattoo markings from that ancient race. The study of this subject would therefore be of antiquarian as well as of general interest. 304

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait MI
Bedouins MJ4

Averting Evil Eye

Chap. X tribal shaikhs, on the other hand, usually content themselves with one wife. In Kuwait, for instance, the ruler's Queen is a lady of the Al Subah. She is never divorced—such a thing would be a disgrace to the family as a whole. She remains the Shaikhah always. She magnanimously, however, allows the Shaikh Ibn Subah to take three other tribal wives, to amuse himself with, and to change them as often as he likes, provided he does not bring them into the town of Kuwait itself. They must remain in the desert. In this way her pride is satisfied. She remains the Queen. Here is an object lesson to the West.

K 643 587

At the birth of a child to a Badawin mother, a dagger, piece of steel, or even a needle or bodkin, must be placed in the cot or attached to the clothes of the baby. The mother cannot move the child without this piece of metal going with it. Iron or steel, is the thing that counts. Gold, etc., will not do. The idea is that it wards off the Evil Eye. The custom is universal among the Mutair, Dhafir, Shammar, 'Ajman and 'Awazim tribes, and probably will be found to exist among all the desert tribes.

B 844 753

A woman is said to be *hámila* or *habla* when she is pregnant. She is said to have *walddat* or *thind'at* when the child is born. The term *thina* is always used for the unborn child.

B 843

CIRCUMCISION

Among the Badawin circumcision is performed when the boy is between three and a half and seven years.

B 304 852

The operation is usually done by one who has had previous practice. The day is looked upon as a family holiday, and according to a man's means, guests and neighbours are invited to a meal, best clothes are donned, and the womenfolk dance among themselves till a late hour, except the mother, who runs away (*tinhash*) and hides herself. The boy is now a "proper Muslim".

The season for the circumcision ceremony is nearly always June (*al Sifdri*) when the *bárih* or dry north-west wind is blowing. The wound is supposed to heal quickly then. If the sea is near by, the boy is encouraged to bathe, the salty nature of the water acting as an antiseptic.

Among some Badawin the feasting of guests and neighbours goes on for the number of days that the boy has years, i.e. if he is six years

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait MI1
Bedouins MJ4

B 304 852

old, feasting goes on for six days, if three years then three days, and so on.

K 304 852 574

Among Najd town-dwellers and in Kuwait city the ceremony[1] is gone through with much more elaboration. Feasting and festivity continue for a full seven days before the actual ceremony. Women and girls seem to look upon the occasion as their particular feast. Every evening about 4 p.m. the women and children of the neighbourhood are invited by the mother and relatives of the boy to their house. Here refreshments, sherbet, coffee and sweetmeats are handed round, whilst singing, dancing and ululating go on. There are no men present, and any woman may dance as the spirit moves her. In Kuwait a band of some twenty-five negress minstrels, young and old, usually offer their services free, the entertainment being looked upon as a religious duty which brings luck in its train.

K 518 304 852

It is also not uncommon for half a dozen professional prostitutes to band together and come to the party unasked, to sing and dance and entertain the guests. Here again no fees are charged. The prostitutes believe that on such occasions they gain merit and favour from the Almighty by entertaining free of charge. The negress band and the gaily dressed prostitutes certainly give a dash of colour and gaiety to the proceedings and on these occasions no one, not even the most modest maiden, is shocked by the presence of her fallen sisters.

K 852 304

For seven days the entertainment and rejoicing continue, as a rule from about 4 p.m. to about 8 p.m. Then on the eighth day in the presence of the family circle only, the operator (in Kuwait he is known as *al Hindi*) arrives on the scene and with an ordinary razor cuts off the child's foreskin. His assistants are of course males, the father and one or two members of the family being the actual helpers. These assistants encourage the small boy to be brave and be "a man", and try to keep him cheerful to the end.

The mother as a rule goes off to a neighbour's house, as she cannot bear to see her son suffer. Apart from the mother, sisters, aunts and female slaves can be present, and one woman in particular acts as the child's comforter, as soon as the operation is over.

In 1933, whilst I was living in Kuwait, I was allowed to visit the house of our Muhammadan serving girl, on two occasions when the preliminary rejoicing and dancing were in full swing. It was very

[1] The circumcision of a young boy -- Analyst]

l: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait MI
Bedouins MJ4
Muntafiq

interesting. I was also able to insist—though friend *al Hindi* did not like my interference—on the razor being sterilised in boiling water with a permanganate solution, before the actual operation was done. After the operation, and until the wound was healed, I provided the mother with lint, bandages, boric ointment and was able to advise on the daily dressing of the wound. The patient got well inside eight days. Among the Arabs, the convalescence after the operation is often attended by most painful and unfortunate results. The wound turns septic and refuses to heal, and much inflammation with consequent agony to the child is the result.

Dr. Mylrea of the American Mission told me in 1931 that each year he had dozens of cases brought him of male children, whose organ, as a result of circumcision, was in a dreadful state of neglect and inflammation. In 1935 he again told me that better-class Arabs were more and more learning to bring their boys to him for the operation and that this was most encouraging. He was able as a rule to return the child cured in about five or six days.

Any neighbours whose children have to be circumcised bring them to the house where *al Hindi* is operating, and so five or six little boys are usually operated on at the same time.

Among the Badawins of North-East Arabia and Najd, and among the people of Kuwait, girls do not go through any form of circumcision ceremony. I am told, however, on very good authority that further south, and also in Basra, the little girls go through a corresponding operation. I had this from Muthi, our very dear friend the Mutairi wife of Faleh bin 'Aamir of the Mu'aha, and also from an 'Anizah woman on 22nd August, 1933. A Shammari lady on the other hand told us on 28th August, 1933, that among certain Shammar families, the operation was done quietly and without fuss. No one but the female members of the family, she said, were told, and the neighbours knew nothing about it. The operation was done by a woman well versed in her job, who was paid for it.

All three women said that the Muntafiq settled tribes, and the Muntafiq shepherd tribes, as well as the gypsies* of Iraq, circumcised their girls, and that the woman who operated among other communities as a rule came from these tribes. The mode of operation was,

* Known as "Kauliyah".

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4
Muntafiq
Middle East MI

B
304

I gathered, for a needle and thread to be passed through the clitoris, which was pulled outwards to its full length by means of the thread. When so extended it was cut off close to the body.

ME
779
304

According to Haji 'Abdullah al Fathil, Musulmani (Mr. Williamson) 28th March, 1933, the circumcision of females was advised by the Islamic religion, but was in no way ordained as necessary. He also added that the reason why the Sunnis of Basra generally, and especially their leading families, went in for the custom, was because of the town's Bani Tamim ancestry. The old Bani Tamim always practised female circumcision. My friend Haji 'Abdullah went further, and made the rather surprising statement that the circumcision of Islamic females was not definitely laid down as necessary in Islam. It was conceivable that an adult convert who objected to or feared the operation might evade it, though ordinary custom demanded the ceremony in almost every case. I leave my readers to discuss this last statement. I prefer not to commit myself.

B
551

WOMEN'S NAMES

(Among Mutair, Dhafir, Shammar, 'Ajman, 'Awazim, 'Anizah and other great tribes.)

'Adda
'Afra
Al 'Aati
Al Jázi
Al Jidá'a—Given to a girl who has had part of her ear cut off and eaten by her mother. If a woman has lost several children the mother seeks by this procedure to save her latest. ['Ajman and other tribes.]
'Amsha
'Asheba
'Athaiya
'Atsha
'Aysha
'Azíza
Daghaima
Dahmeliya
Dhiba
Dhira—Given to a girl whose mother was frightened by bad news before her birth.
Faiha
Fátima
Filwa
Ghanima
Ghazaiyil—little gazelle ['Ajman.]
Gwai'a
Hajaja
Haiyya
Hathla
Hussa
Huwaiya
'Iyda
Jahaira
Khasna

L: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4
Muntafiq
Middle East MI

ME
563
B
463
304

black tents, moving about by the aid of donkeys which seem to form their only visible means of support. These Iraq Kauliyahs are thieves, bad characters, fortune-tellers, are versed in the art of palmistry of sorts, and last but not least their women are in demand for performing the operation of "circumcision of female babies", a rite which is widely practised in Southern Iraq, and among the Muntafiq tribes of the Euphrates and Bani Tamim Arabs.

DESCRIPTION OF A SULUBBA DANCE

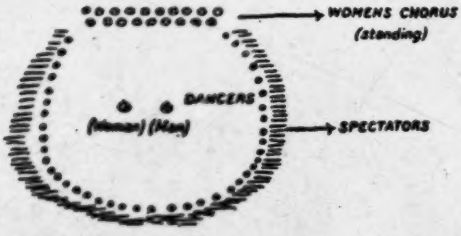
(seen on 3rd June, 1934, at Kuwait)

B
535
852

The dance took place in the Sulubba Encampment near Qasr Naif just inside the Naif Gate. The occasion was the three days' feasting preceding the circumcision of a male child. For two days dancing had taken place, but the third day was reserved for the best and biggest show.

The usual cross with half a woman's *thaub* hanging to it or draped over it was in its place over the tent which was rejoicing, a sign to all and everyone that a dance was to take place.

The chief performer and master of ceremonies combined was an elderly man whose child had just been circumcised. He entered the arena formed by Sulubbas male and female and other onlookers, waving a sword round his head and inviting the Sulubbi maidens and Sulubbi braves to come and join him. Presently, after marching round the human circle several times, there was a stir and from a



neighbouring tent a pretty young lass decked out in her festal garments (saffron, violet or green covered with her voile *thaub*), dashed into the circle, bare-headed and bare-faced with her tresses all undone

l: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4
Muntafiq

APPENDIX XXXI

BADÚR (FAWÁZ SECTION) TRIBAL GIRL (continued) 304

(see page 170)

Markings of second girl taken in Kuwait desert on 18-3-38.
[Name—THAMAMA mart KHAZĀR].
Subject a married girl as taken from life.

(a) (b) (c) (d) (e)

Eyebrows also tattooed in straight lines.

"AL BAKSHA" Pattern.

Tattooed on left and right wrists on inside. Pattern "AL BAKSHA" 2" long.

Pattern right round ankle.

This line in centre of instep. Nothing on reverse side.

Tattoo-marks on forearm and upper arm as in previous sketch.

TATTOO MARKINGS

TRIBE BANI MALIK, hab: SUQ esh SHUYUKH, MUNTAFIQ—IRAQ

Taken in KUWAIT DESERT (from life) 1945

Name of girl NAUFA, (married)

Outer edge of left arm between wrist and elbow

Back of left hand and wrist

Palm of hand

Back of right hand and wrist (no marks on arm or inside wrist)

"AL BAKSHA" pattern

Right wrist underside